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LOOK TO THE SHRUBBY CONIFERS FOR WINTER COLOR

Coniferous evergreens if carefully selected and discriminately used can do much to relieve the sombreness evident in so many of our landscapes from November until late March. And, although groupings composed entirely of conifers are usually not recommended because of the monotonous, unimaginative and often disturbing appearance they present due to the complexity of forms involved, it is possible by combining them with several of the more reliable broadleaved evergreens, an evergreen ground cover of some sort, and for variety, a few deciduous trees and shrubs of picturesque character, to achieve compositions of surprising effectiveness.

Anyone who is observing will have noted that a majority of evergreens undergo three color changes within the course of a year. The first, occurring in spring when the new growth expands, provides the most marked contrast, one in which the brighter, lighter colored new growth is handsomely set off by the dark green of older foliage. During the summer a less pronounced change takes place as the new growth assumes the darker hue of maturity. It is in late autumn and winter, however, that some of the most pronounced variations occur. For, at that time the normal green of numerous forms undergoes a change, in some plants to pinkish, purplish plum or magenta, in some to yellow green and in others to brown. Not all changes are attractive and not all combine easily.

The arborescent conifers are excellent background material for winter groupings, the pines contributing gray or blue green, dark or almost black foliage masses, the spruces green, silvery or blue needles and the firs greens of livelier hue supplanted in some species by silvery or blue

notes. In contrast the hemlocks show brighter green winter color and the arborvitae, foliage dulled to yellowish or brown. As has just been stated, though, it is the junipers which provide the widest range of color.

Notwithstanding the old landscape rule to the effect that the farther the color of a conifer deviates from the normal dark green the less it should be planted, there are exceptions, of which the Yellowthread Sawara Falsecypress, *Chamaecyparis pisifera filifera aurea,* is one. For whatever the season, this 10 ft. bushy plant with slender, pendulous scale-like foliage of bright yellow is the center of interest. Planting in full sunlight induces the brightest coloring which shows up best in the tip growth. Not quite as tall, but equally interesting is the Sulphur-plume Sawara Falsecypress, *Chamaecyparis pisifera plumosa sulphurea,* an erect branched form whose sulphur yellow foliage is borne in erect, fern-like sprays. Also a part of the collection is the Variegated Yellow-thread Falsecypress, *Chamaecyparis pisifera filifera aureo variegata,* a low very compact mounded form (2½ ft. tall at present) whose foliage color is yellow. No variegation is evident at this season. Although not as reliable at the Arboretum as those just mentioned the fine needled Moss Sawara Falsecypress, *Chamaecyparis squarrosa,* is known for the bluish cast of its silvery green needles.

Among the Junipers will be found subjects of every size, shape and color. The tall slender types are represented by the Blue Columnar Chinese Juniper, *Juniperus chinensis columnaris,* the even narrower, prickly needled Irish Juniper, *Juniperus communis hibernica,* (silvery green) and the many variations of the Red Cedar, largely avoided here because of their susceptibility to Cedar Apple Rust. Best known of the semi-erect spreaders is, of course, the widely used Pfitzer, *Juniperus chinensis pfitzeriana,* available today in a variety of sizes, shapes and colors including bluish gray and gold. The taller, more silvery, blue fruited Hetz Juniper, *Juniperus chinensis hetzi,* is one of the most conspicuous although there are promising selections among the lower, compact types. One such plant is Nicks Compact Pfitzer, *J. chinensis pfitzeriana* 'Nicks Compact', a neat dense growing clone (18 to 20″ tall) whose fine textured foliage is distinctly more silvery than that of the type. Still different in habit is the so-called Upright Common Juniper, *J. communis depressa aurea,* a semi-erect variety (to 2 ft.) whose branches extend outward at acute angles. The winter foliage effect shows an unusual color combination, the lower surfaces of the prickly needles blending golden yellow and brown, the upper dark green with the gray of the prominent midribs. The stems of the new growth are straw colored. Globe shaped forms are less numerous, the Globe Red Cedar,

The Yellowthread Sawara Falsecypress, *Chamaecyparis pisifera filifera aurea*—Beiss, yellow foliaged conifer of interest whatever the season.

Juniperus virginiana globosa, being recognized as one of the best of the lot. It is in the class comprising the low spreaders and procumbent species and varieties, however, that the greatest variation exists. Fortunately, too, for it is these which figure most prominently in landscaping. Some of the best are selections of the Creeping Juniper, *Juniperus horizontalis,* a widely distributed species ranging from Nova Scotia to Alberta and southward to New Jersey, Minnesota and Montana. The following were noted as having special merit colorwise: *'adpressa',* a widespreading flat form not over a foot in height with silvery new growth and plum colored older foliage; *'argenteus',* a clone similar to Waukegan Juniper with shorter branches building up to 18 inches at the center of the plant but remaining lower at the outer extremities; 'Bar Harbor', a ground hugging form almost low enough to permit a lawn mower to be run over it, with unobjectionable slaty winter color and large fruit changing from frosty gray to blue; 'Black Hills Creeper', a wide, outward spreading selection remaining less than a foot in height and developing a lively frosty winter color; *'douglasi',* the Waukegan Juniper, native variety whose long trailing branches are covered with steel blue foliage assuming a plum cast in winter; *'eximius',* a widespreading bronzy toned (winter) clone with silvery new growth; *'filicinus minimus',* a distinctive spreader with fine textured brown foliage accented with silver; 'Gray Carpet', another interesting spreading type (to 18 inches) with flat, erectly borne foliage sprays of pleasing frosty lavender color; *'lividus',* low grower (1 ft.) with fine textured almost fern-like foliage of brownish tone; *'plumosa',* the well known Andorra Juniper, a neat flat topped conifer from 18 inches to 2 ft. tall with blue green summer foliage which becomes magenta or plum colored in winter (old plants form depressed masses up to 6 ft. across); and *'variegata',* Variegated Creeping Juniper, variety of straggling growth habit noteworthy because of the unusual variegation of its foliage. The winter aspect is an attractive purplish slate color with contrasting straw colored accents. Some branches are all yellow, others variegated.

Several of the Chinese Juniper varieties may be mentioned, too, *"chinensis alba",* the rather uncommon Whiteleaf Chinese Juniper, a low spreading plant to 1 ft. showing both variegated and all white branches with little or no winter bronzing; and the Sargent Juniper, *Juniperus chinensis sargenti,* from the Kurile Islands, where it spreads its prostrate foliage mats along sandy seashores. Young plants bear mostly grass green acicular leaves, while older specimens exhibit bluish green scale-like needles. Both remain pleasingly colored in winter. Picturesqueness is a special characteristic of another *"chinensis"* variety, *'plumosa aurea',* an irregularly branched plant with dense, tightly clustered foliage of old

gold. In the Juniper collection is a 3½ ft. specimen as attractive as a trained bonsai. Always a favorite among the low growers is the handsome Japgarden Juniper, *Juniperus procumbens,* picturesque wide spreader with sharp pointed, bluish green needles marked on their upper surfaces by two white lines. Winter dulls the lustre of the new growth to a degree without lessening its attractiveness. Here it reaches 30 inches in the center of the plant becoming almost procumbent at the perimeter. A miniature version (to 18 inches) of the Japgarden Juniper is *J. procumbens nana,* a smaller needled, closely compact variety with tufted foliage of fine texture and subtle coloring. An extremely picturesque subject. Lower and very compact is *Juniperus prostrata venusta, (horizontalis venusta),* flat creeper less than 8 inches high with long procumbent runners of frosty appearance. In winter it shows some evidence of plum color.

Other shrubby conifers with winter landscape appeal include some of the dwarf spruces such as *Picea abies nidiformis,* the Nest Norway Spruce, flat topped, very compact pygmy (to 36") with winter color of medium green and the Remont Norway Spruce, *Picea abies remonti,* (to 6 ft.), rounded variety with densely arranged needles. Both grow very slowly, however. Several shrubby pines are also of merit; *Pinus mugo compacta,* the Globe Mugo Pine, with needles of pleasing bright green; *Pinus strobus nana,* a dwarf White Pine valued for its compactness and fine textured silvery needles and its taller, symmetrically pyramidal relative, *"densa".* The Waterer Scotch Pine, *Pinus sylvestris watereri,* is another favorite, a medium sized (to 10 ft.) broad pyramidal plant of compact habit with striking steel blue summer color which winter subdues somewhat. Its shrubby character is retained indefinitely.

The deep, almost black winter color of the yews (*Taxus* in variety) needs no introduction and as they were discussed in detail in a fairly recent bulletin little more will be said about them other than to mention again their tolerance of shaded planting sites. Among conifers only the hemlocks share this desirable trait, in direct contrast to the junipers, pines and spruce which are all sun lovers.

E. L. Kammerer

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